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Justices won't hear dispute over access to health records

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WASHINGTON - The Supreme Court won't hear a dispute between West Virginia health officials and a patient advocacy group over access to medical records.

The justices on Tuesday let stand a state court ruling that said federal laws protecting health record privacy don't prevent Legal Aid of West Virginia from reviewing patient files at the state's two psychiatric hospitals.

For more than two decades the legal aid group has helped psychiatric patients file grievances over alleged abuse and neglect. State law allows access to patient files without written consent.

But state officials began restricting the group's access to patient files in 2014, saying it violates federal privacy laws.

A state circuit court sided with the patient advocates. The state supreme court agreed.

State officials argued that federal law trumps state law.

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